

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 AID-05 IO-10 /070 W

----- 023043

R 221025Z JAN 75

FM AMCONSUL LAHORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 304

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMCONSUL KARACHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LAHORE 0085

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PK

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE CHANGES IN PUNJAB GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP

REF: A) LAHORE 0026, B) LAHORE 0041, C) LAHORE A13, 7/30/74

BEGIN SUMMARY: MUSTAFA KHAR CLAIMED HE WILL BE APPOINTED GOVERNOR OF PUNJAB ON FEB 2, AND THAT SADIQ HUSSAIN QURESHI WILL BE MADE CHIEF MINISTER SOON THEREAFTER. DPO DOES NOT BELIEVE IT WILL HAPPEN, BUT WE SHALL WAIT AND SEE. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING CALL BY S/P MEMBER THOMAS THORNTON AND DPO JAN 21, FORMER CHIEF MINISTER MUSTAFA KHAR SAID "CONFIDENTIALLY" THAT HE WOULD BE APPOINTED GOVERNOR OF PUNJAB ON FEB 2. ASKED WHAT WOULD BECOME OF INCUMBENT GOVERNOR QURESHI, KHAR SAID "HE WILL BE MY CHIEF MINISTER." HE ADDED THAT HE WOULD RESIGN HIS PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY SEAT, OPENING WAY FOR QURESHI TO CONTEST IN SNAP ELECTION SO THAT HE COULD BECOME CHIEF MINISTER. KHAR DEFLECTED FURTHER QUESTIONS ABOUT RAMAY AND OTHERS IN PRESENT GOVERNMENT.

2. KHAR EXPLAINED THAT DECISION TO RETURN HIM TO GOVERNOR'S HOUSE WAS TAKEN BY PRIME MINISTER DURING
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THREE-HOUR PRIVATE AUDIENCE IN RAWALPINDI FOLLOWING PPP

CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING JAN 17. HE CLAIMED THAT HE TOLD BHUTTO HE WOULD TAKE JOB ONLY IF IT MEANT HE WERE TO BE GIVEN REAL POWER IN PUNJAB AND IF "LEFTISTS" IN PPP WERE DOWNGRADED IN IMPORTANCE. ALTHOUGH IT WAS NOT EXPLICITLY STATED, HE INDICATED BHUTTO HAD PROMISED HE WOULD COMPLY.

3. KHAR ALSO MADE PITCH TO USG OFFICERS FOR CLOSER US-PAK TIES. AS "A LEADER OF PAKISTAN'S MOST IMPORTANT PROVINCE," HE BELIEVED IT WAS IMPORTANT TO PUNJABIS AND TO ALL PAKISTANIS TO HAVE US AS THEIR CLOSET FOREIGN FRIEND. HE URGED THORNTON TO TRY TO CONVINCE TOP LEVELS OF FORD ADMINISTRATION THAT IT WAS IN USG'S BEST INTERESTS TO HELP GOP ACHIEVE THAT GOAL. HE SAID TWO MOST CRITICAL AREAS IN WHICH PAKISTAN LOOKED TO US FOR SUPPORT WERE FOOD ASSISTANCE, IN SHORT RUN, AND SECURE DEFENSE, IN LONG RUN. (MEMCON FOLLOWS ELABORATING ON THESE POINTS.)

4. COMMENT: WE FIND KHAR'S REVELATIONS SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE, DESPITE RAMAY'S WELL-KNOWN FEELINGS OF IN-SECURITY. MOREOVER, KHAR HIMSELF SEEMED SLIGHTLY UNCERTAIN AS TO FINALITY OF ALLEGED BHUTTO DECISION TO MAKE HIM GOVERNOR, WHEN HE SAID HE "HOPED" THAT PRIME MINISTER WOULD MEET HIS DEMAND THAT "LEFTISTS" BE DOWNGRADED IN IMPORTANCE IN BOTH GOP AND PPP. IN THIS REGARD, HE STATED HE TOLD BHUTTO THAT APPOINTMENT OF MUBASHIR HASAN AS NATIONAL SECRETARY GENERAL OF PPP WAS "BAD." HE ALSO BELIEVED HE HAD CONVINCED PRIME MINISTER THAT "LEFTISTS" IN PPP SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO REMAIN IN POSITIONS OF LEADERSHIP.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 LAHORE 0085

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5. FURTHERMORE, WE SEE POTENTIAL IMPEDIMENTS TO SMOOTH TRANSFER OF POWER FROM "ISLAMIC SOCIALIST" RAMAY GOVERNMENT TO MORE TRADITION GROUPS HEADED BY KHAR AND GOVERNOR QURESHI. THERE IS NO BAR TO KHAR'S RESIGNING HIS PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY SEAT AND BEING IMMEDIATELY APPOINTED GOVERNOR. HOWEVER, UNDER CONSTITUTION, QURESHI CANNOT BE MADE CHIEF MINISTER UNTIL HE BECOMES MEMBER OF PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY, WHICH IN TURN COULD NOT TAKE PLACE UNTIL ELECTION IS HELD, FOR WHICH MINIMUM OF FOUR TO SIX WEEKS IS NEEDED. ON OTHER HAND, BELIEVE KHAR AND QURESHI COULD PROBABLY WORK TOGETHER EASILY.

6. IT IS ALSO DIFFICULT TO ENVISION EFFECTIVE INTERIM GOVERNMENT WITH KHAR AS GOVERNOR, RAMAY AS CHIEF MINISTER AND KHAR'S AVOWED ENEMY KHAKWANI AS AGRICULTURE MINISTER. HOWEVER, IN RECENT DAYS AT LEAST TWO THOUGHTFUL POLITICAL OBSERVERS IN LAHORE HAVE SUGGESTED THAT SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT WOULD BE TYPICAL OF BHUTTO AS ATTEMPT TO PUBLICLY DEMONSTRATE DISPARATE MEMBERSHIP OF PPP CAN WORK TOGETHER IN HARMONY. PERHPAS KHAR'S SLIGHT UNCERTAINTY AROSE
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FROM SUSPICION THAT PRIME MINISTER JUST MIGHT LET SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT CONTINUE INDEFINITELY.

7. RUMORS ABOUT RAMAY'S IMMINENT DEPARTURE HAVE CIRCULATED IN LAHORE ALMOST CONTINUOUSLY SINCE HE BECAME CHIEF MINISTER IN MARCH 1974. SOME OF THESE RUMORS WERE APPARENTLY INITIATED AND ENCOURAGED BY KHAR HIMSELF (SEE LAHORE 0026), AND HIS REMARKS TO THORNTON AND GRIFFIN MAY HAVE REPRESENTED ANOTHER SUCH EFFORT. STILL, PRIME MINISTER HAS NEVER ALLOWED RAMAY TO BRING HIS PROVINCIAL CABINET TO FULL STRENGTH: SOMETHING WHICH OBVIOUSLY CONCERNS THE CHIEF MINISTER. ANOTHER STRAW IN WIND IS FACT THAT GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED PAKISTAN TIMES, WHICH NORMALLY DEVOTES CONSIDERABLE DAILY SPACE TO OBSEQUIOUS ACCOUNTS OF CHIEF MINISTER'S ACTIVITIES, HAS NOT MENTIONED RAMAY SINCE PPP CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING JAN 17 (WHICH HE ATTENDED), EXCEPT FOR TWO SMALL STORIES ON INSIDE PAGES NOTING HIS CONDOLENCES UPON DEATH OF PROMINENT LOCAL ARTIST. IN

BHUTTO'S PAKISTAN, THIS COULD EITHER BE CONSIDERED INDICATION THAT RAMAY IS ON SKIDS, OR MERELY THAT HE IS CAREFULLY REFRAINING FROM VOICING SUPPORT FOR MUBASHIR HASAN'S APPOINTMENT AS PPP SYG. (GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED PRESS HAS NOT PRINTED ANYTHING WHICH COULD BE CONSTRUED AS FAVORABLE TO KHAR OR HIS FOLLOWERS. MOREOVER, VISITORS' WAITING AREA AT KHAR'S HOUSE, WHICH IN PAST HAS BEEN FULL AT ALL HOURS, WAS EMPTY WHEN THORNTON AND DPO CALLED.)

8. BECAUSE OF POTENTIAL EMBARRASSMENT, IT IS NOT EASY TO BELIEVE THAT ANYONE WHO HAS HELD SUCH IMPORTANT POSITIONS IN PAKISTAN WOULD SAY HE IS TO BE REHABILITATED IF IT IS NOT TRUE, BUT KHAR HAS EXHIBITED IRRATIONAL BEHAVIOR ALMOST EVERY TIME HE HAS TALKED TO DPO (SEE LAHORE A-01 DATED 1/29/74 AND REFAIR C). LOCAL PRESS JAN 22 CARRIED STORY SAYING BHUTTO HAD ORDERED PPP TO PURGE ITSELF OF "SELF-SEEKING ELEMENTS." PERHAPS CYNICALLY, DPO SUGGESTS THAT ONE OF PRIME "SELF-SEEKERS" IN PPP IS KHAR, WHO MAY KNOW HE IS ON WAY OUT AND WISH TO CAUSE TROUBLE ALONG WAY. (ONCE AGAIN, DPO FAILS TO BELIEVE KHAR THINKS HE WON'T REPORT CONVERSATION.) MOREOVER, KHAR CAN ALWAYS FALL BACK ON CONFIDENTIAL

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STORY THAT PRIME MINISTER CHANGED HIS MIND.

9. ONLY THING OF WHICH WE ARE CERTAIN AT MOMENT IS THAT KHAR MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE WANTS TO RETURN TO POSITION OF PRIME POLITICAL POWER IN PUNJAB, IN PART TO OBTAIN REVENGE AGAINST RAMAY AND OTHERS IN CABINET. WE ALSO HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT IN PAST TEN MONTHS HE HAS TURNED DOWN OFFERS OF OTHER IMPORTANT POSITIONS FROM PRIME MINISTER, ALL OF WHICH WERE OUTSIDE PROVINCE. HAVING SAID THIS, WE WILL HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENS.
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